Remarks of
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Communications Workers of America

FCC Public Hearing on Media Ownership
Los Angeles, CA
October 3, 2006

Chairman Martin, Commissioners. Good evening. My name is James C. Joyce, Vice President of the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians/CWA. Our Union represents 10,000 broadcast professionals at local TV and radio stations, and at the Networks throughout the country.

NABET is part of the Communications Workers of America. CWA also represents journalists through The Newspaper Guild, and printers through the ITU, all of whom will be profoundly affected by changes in the media ownership limits. And CWA's other 700,000 members rely on a diverse and vibrant media to be informed citizens in our democracy.

Our members know what happens when one company owns more than one TV station or a major TV station and the monopoly newspaper in the same market. The owner merges operations, slashes jobs, and reduces the quantity and quality of the news.

Los Angeles is a poster child for broadcast media concentration. Here, we have one television triopoly and three duopolies. NABET members work at many of these stations.

NBC owns three television stations here: KNBC and two Spanish-language stations KWHY and KVEA. NBC acquired the Spanish-language stations when it purchased Telemundo. Within a year of that purchase, NBC merged the stations into one facility in Burbank. They combined the technical operations, sales and marketing, and the newsroom. Ten percent of the workforce lost their jobs, most of whom were Spanish-speaking employees from Telemundo. The consolidation has now extended into nearby markets as KWHY-TV retransmits its programming to San Diego and Santa Barbara.

Before NBC bought Telemundo, each of the stations had a separate news operation. They were competitors. Now the news operations are commingled. Two assignment editors -- one for English-language KNBC and the other for the Spanish-language stations -- coordinate coverage, and send one crew to shoot video for all three stations. The two Spanish-language stations often use the same reporter who carries a four-sided microphone flag, like this one. The reporter displays the KVEA letters for the KVEA stand-up, and then flips the microphone to read the same exact script for the KWHY stand-up.

And NBC is taking consolidation one step further. It is creating a "SuperDesk" to merge the assignment desks of KNBC, KVEA, KWHY, the NBC Network, and possibly CNBC and MSNBC.

On to Fox. Fox owns two stations here: KTTV-channel 11 and KCOP-channel 13. Fox acquired this duopoly when News Corp. purchased ChrisCraft.[1] After the acquisition, the stations merged technical operations, cutting the number of technicians and engineers by 10 percent. Today, there is one General Manager, one News Director, and one assignment editor overseeing both stations. While one production crew sometimes covers the same story, KTTV and KCOP have done a better job than NBC in maintaining separate in-house production crews.

Next, Univision, which owns KMEX-channel 34 and KFTR-channel 46. After the merger, the technical operations were combined, and 10 percent of the employees lost their jobs, including every technician at KFTR. More recently, KMEX cut staffing another 40 percent, and replaced union employees with non-union minimum wage workers, in violation of the union contract.

An investor group is now buying Univision. This purchase would create additional cross-owned newspaper/TV properties here in L.A., Phoenix, and Fresno, and would result in violations of radio ownership rules in San Francisco, Dallas, and Houston. It would also implicate a waiver in Puerto Rico and New York State. In addition, Univision has requested reauthorization of a permanent waiver to the network representation rule, which has allowed Univision to run its own internal ad agency, stifling competition and job creation among Hispanic small businesses.

Finally, Viacom-CBS owns both KCAL-channel 9 and KCBS-channel 2. These stations extensively commingle, sharing reporters and often airing the same news

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[1] Nationwide, Fox has nine duopolies: New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, Washington DC,

story. They even co-brand their news gathering vehicles in this market to highlight their single news operation. As you can see on the picture I am holding up, the KCBS and KCAL logos are featured side by side on their vehicles. KCBS has cut jobs, represented by another union, the IBEW.

While these changes may be more "efficient," they do not advance the goals of competition, diversity, and localism. This is not good for democracy.

Media owners claim they need to merge local operations to save the local TV and newspaper businesses. But local TV news is highly profitable, with 50 percent margins. Newspapers typically earn 20 percent or more. And media owners don't need common ownership to maintain healthy news operations. With the digital transition, local stations now can, and do, broadcast multiple program streams, creating new revenue and programming opportunities.

Media owners have themselves to blame for decline in audience share. To earn super-profits, they cut staff and resources. As quality declines, audiences drift away. A vicious cycle sets in. Media companies that invest in quality journalism see growth. But too many media owners choose instead to boost profits through mergers and more cuts.

One thing we know: allowing more common ownership will not improve the quality and diversity of local news coverage. We urge the Commission to preserve strong structural limits to encourage the widest possible dissemination of information that is so essential to a vibrant democracy.

Houston, Phoenix, Minneapolis, and Orlando. In New York City, Fox also owns the *New York Post.*

Thank you.